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Christmas in Art

Frederick Keppel

CHRISTMAS IN ART

DUTCH SCHOOL

REMBRANDT VAN RYN (1607–1669)

"The Angel announcing the Birth of Christ to the Shepherds." From an original etching by Rembrandt, dated 1634. *See descriptive paragraph on page* 118.

CHRISTMAS IN ART

The Nativity as Depicted by Artists of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

BY

FREDERICK KEPPEL

With numerous illustrations, chiefly reproductions of Rare Prints in the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale

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The author's special thanks are also due to the authorities of the British Museum and of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, who accorded to him the unusual favour of allowing him to have reproductions made of many precious original prints to illustrate this book.

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CHRISTMAS IN ART

Christmas in Art

IT is a pity that the conscientious, grim old Puritans seemed to hate beauty in every form —just as they hated wholesome human mirth. To them Christmas was a Popish superstition, just as were the festivals of Corpus Christi or the Immaculate Conception. In the United States, forty years ago, the great Christian festival of the birth of Christ was observed only by the Roman Catholic and the Prot-

estant Episcopal Churches, while such great religious bodies as the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Congregationalists neglected it. To be sure they kept up, for the children, the myth of Santa Claus, but what a poor substitute was this for the beauty and poetry of Christmas Day!

Meanwhile, and for centuries, Christmas was, and is now, the greatest day of the year in England, in Germany, and throughout the Catholic and the Greek churches. All the happy home-comings of

grown-up sons and daughters, all the festivity, good will, and good cheer which belong to our own festival of Thanksgiving Day belonged in Europe, and still belong, to Christmas. Happily, of recent years, our American Puritan grimness is rapidly disappearing and is giving place to the older and more joyous observances of the day, which have long been so potent in other countries of Christendom.

In one respect a picture is like a dinner; verbal description of either is inadequate, and one must view

the picture or eat the dinner, as the case may be, if one desires to form an opinion of the quality of the one or the other. In view of the title of this book, it would have been my duty to print in its pages a careful description of each illustration, were it not that we lay before the reader the pictures themselves.

In the case of Biblical pictures, as in the case of ecclesiastical architecture and sculpture, the finest are certainly those produced in centuries past and not those of our own too sophisticated day. The

FLORENTINE SCHOOL

GIOTTO (1266-1337)

"The Nativity and the Adoration of the Shepherds."
From the original painting in Florence.

GIOTTO was the father of modern painting. Born in the year 1266, he was the first artist whose productions merit the name of pictures. It is easy to see his crudities, but yet "the root of the matter" was in him. It will be seen that his idea of the forms of trees is particularly innocent and almost childish.

really great works of Christian art were made in the epochs of simple and unquestioning faith. Take the case of the churches of Paris. Four very ambitious ones are of the nineteenth century, namely, the Madeleine, St. Augustin, La Trinité, and the Panthéon. All of them are superb and scholarly edifices from the architect's point of view, but where do we find in them the truly religious inspiration of simpler churches which were designed and built centuries earlier? The stately pile of the Panthéon is only a modified echo of St. Peter's at Rome or of

St. Paul's Cathedral, London; but if one turns from the Panthéon to the adjoining ancient parish church of St. Étienne du Mont, he will at once see and feel the difference. This much less ambitious and less pretentious old church "shames" the modern one "as daylight doth a lamp."

It is the same with pictures. Albert Dürer, who was born at Nuremberg in 1471, was full of simple credence in the Catholic Church of four centuries ago, although he lived to see his native

"The Adoration of the Three Kings with their Retinues." The Annunciation to the Shepherds in the middle distance. From a mediæval illumination.

THE names have not been preserved of any of these devout monks of the Middle Ages, who made illuminated pictures for missals and other devotional books. They usually made their pictures on vellum, and, in general, both their colors and the gold which they used in them are as brilliant to-day as they can have been long centuries ago.

city a centre of the Reformation, and although he engraved a fine portrait of the reformer, Philip Melancthon; but from Dürer we get some of the most heartfelt and truly beautiful pictures of the Nativity. Notice the original engraving done by him in the year 1504. Here we see the Virgin Mother adoring her Holy Child, while Saint Joseph is engaged in the prosaic domestic employment of drawing water from a well. The surrounding buildings are entirely in the manner of Nuremberg, and not at all like those of Palestine;

but what does that matter? — the picture as it stands is a beautiful one, and full of genuine inspiration.

Take again the original etching by Rembrandt, the angel announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds. The picture was etched in the year 1634. It is really a sublime composition, notwithstanding its close approach, in parts, to the innocently ludicrous. The whole conception of the scene may justly be called noble and exalted; but such details as the heavy Dutch angel and the "pinwheel" of cher-

ubs whirling above him, as well as the consternation of the cattle and the shepherds below, are, to us, perilously near being ridiculous — although the master never meant them to be so. In this old picture, I repeat, we have genuine feeling. The artists made their pictures just as they felt them, and genuine feeling is the source of all great art, no matter through what medium the artist may express himself.

In considering the pictures of sacred subjects produced in the early ages of faith and simplicity,

we must not forget that the chief intention of the artist was to stimulate the piety of the spectator, and not to make a "pretty" picture. Thus it is recorded of the saintly Florentine monk, Fra Angelico (1387–1455), that before he began the painting of a religious subject he fasted and prayed, and that while he was at work on his picture he always remained kneeling. That was the true spirit for the production of works of art which rank as being permanently great. John Ruskin has an eloquent chapter in which he describes the building of

"The Nativity"; with the Annunciation to the Shepherds in the upper right-hand corner. From a picture in an ancient missal. Probably the work of a mediæval monk.

In the original the halo round the head of the Madonna is of rich embossed gold. This anonymous artist gives us an interesting and sincere picture, although his sense of perspective, and of the forms of animals, is of the crudest.

Deus in ad
uitorium
meum inten
de.
Domine ad adiu
uandum me festina
Gloria patri et filio
et spiritui sancto.

a great cathedral. Not only did the hirelings work for their wages, as they do in our own day, but noble lords and ladies dragged great stones to the base of the building as a direct act of devotion, and while so employed continued to repeat their prayers.

Other artists besides the painters and engravers have made the day glorious. Shakespeare was full of the Christmas spirit when (in the first scene of the first act of Hamlet) he makes the soldier Marcellus say to Horatio:

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

His comrade, Horatio, who was a scholar, evidently was not prepared to swallow the statement that when Christmas was coming the cocks crew all night long, and so he answers:

"So have I heard, and do, in part, believe it."

John Milton's magnificent hymn in his "Ode on the Morning of

FRENCH SCHOOL

JEHAN FOUCQUET (1415-1477)

"The Adoration of the Shepherds." From the painting in the Musée Condé, Chantilly.

THE French school of painting of the Fifteenth century is much less known than the Italian or German schools of the same period. There is a very good reason for this; not only were the French pictures much fewer in number but they were decidedly inferior in quality at that time. How greatly have things changed since the year 1500. To-day the French school is above and beyond any other; and the worst that rival painters of other countries can say against it is that the French artists of to-day are "too clever." All the same, these objectors would be only too glad if they could rise to that same cleverness.

Christ's Nativity" is familiar to us all. I mean the poem beginning:

"It was in winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to Him,
Hath doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize."

Shakespeare's contemporary and friend, Ben Jonson, English poet laureate, wrote a devout hymn on the Nativity. Two verses of it are here copied from the second folio edition of his poems, dated 1640.

A HYMN ON THE NATIVITY OF MY SAVIOUR

I sing the birth was born to-night,
The Author both of life and light;
The angels so did sound it,
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the price of sin,
To make us heirs of glory!
To see this Babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence.
Can men forget this story?

Other specially famous Christmas hymns are:

"Hark, the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King,"

written by Charles Wesley (1739).

And Nahum Tate:

While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he; (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;)
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you, in David's town, this day
Is born of David's line
The Saviour, Who is CHRIST the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view display'd,
All meanly wrapt in swathing-bands,
And in a manger laid."

Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta (1811), gives us this hymn, of which I quote four verses:

" Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

" Cold on His cradle the dew-drops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

" Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom and offerings divine?
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

" Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor."

FLEMISH SCHOOL

HANS MEMLING (1425–1492)

"The Adoration of the Magi." From the painting in the Prado, Madrid.

THIS very early Flemish picture exhibits both the faults and the excellencies of its period. Aerial perspective was then unknown, and so we see that distant objects are quite as sharply defined as objects in the foreground. Another defect in this famous picture is that the faces lack expression. Two centuries later Rembrandt would never have fallen into this fault — although his picture would have been powerful, it would have been clumsy and undignified in comparison with Memling's.

Heber had an extraordinary talent for the clear and simple construction of excellent verse. Other poets (such as Swinburne) are justly famous for their skill in the construction of verse; but to a plain man like myself one difference between these two poets is, that while I recognize Swinburne's immense constructive ability, I am not always clear as to what the poet is "driving at," — while the bishop's verses are all as clear as the sun at noonday.

No mention of the best verses on the Nativity would be complete

if it did not include the hymn of our American bishop, the late Phillips Brooks, of Boston. I quote it in full:

O little town of Bethlehem!
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to men on earth.

PADUAN SCHOOL

ANDREA MANTEGNA (1431-1506)

"The Virgin and Child." Original line engraving.

THIS quaint and archaic line engraving is instinct with the sentiment of Maternity. Every picture which Mantegna made is done in the "grand style," and this grand style culminated afterward in the compositions of Michelangelo.

An English writer on sacred music maintains that it is much easier to compose pretty — or even beautiful — music than it is to give it the supreme quality of sublimity.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel! *

It may be objected that the poems which are cited are already

* Reprinted here by courtesy of E. P. Dutton & Company.

familiar to every reader; well, I wish they were! Why do these prevail while hundreds of others are forgotten? Simply because they are exceptionally good. I never had much sympathy with that itch for novelty which rejects everything, however good, just because it has been read or heard already. But in my desire to satisfy "all sorts and conditions of men," I append two Christmas poems which appear for the first time in this book; although I cannot claim that they rank with the masterpieces of the past:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY SARAH KEPPEL VICKERY

Of old from lonely Nazareth
Two pilgrims forth did fare.
O pity for thee, gentle maid,
The way is long and bare.

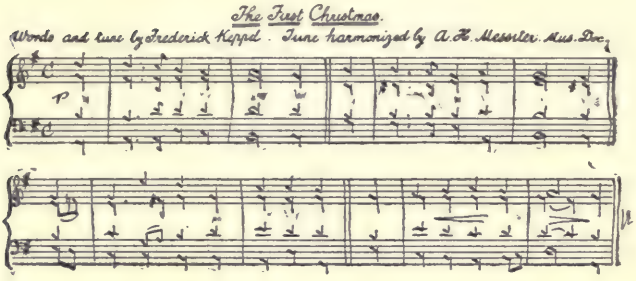
Weary and late they reach the inn.
"No room, no room," men say.
O pity for thee, gentle maid,
Will no one bid thee stay?

Yes, kindly hands prepare thy bed
Amid the fragrant hay.
The quiet kine are all about
And mutely bid thee stay.

O blessed Babe, we stretch our arms
To welcome thee to-day.
Our hearts shall be a rest for thee
And gladly bid thee stay.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

BY FREDERICK KEPPEL



In loving worship bending,
God's angels bright attending,
The mother mild
Adores the Child
Whose kingdom hath no ending.

We hail thee, infant stranger,
Asleep in lowly manger,
The King of kings
His rescue brings
To human souls in danger.

GERMAN SCHOOL

MARTIN SCHONGAUER (1446–1488)

"The Virgin and Child seated in a Courtyard." Original line engraving. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

In looking at an engraving by Martin Schongauer it must not be forgotten that he antedated Dürer by about half a century. Schongauer's drawing is not so masterly as was Dürer's, but the prints of the former are full of genuine artistic feeling. Also the perspective in this picture is managed with great skill.

O Christ, enthroned in glory,
Through ages dim and hoary;
God's message, then,
"Good will toward men,"
Is all the world's best story.

In addition to the makers of pictures and the writers of poems there were other artists who celebrated the Nativity. These were the prose writers and the composers of Christmas music.

Charles Dickens, in short stories such as his "Christmas Carol" and "The Chimes," has given us models which remain unsurpassed. His joyous and sympathetic nature

here shows itself at its very best, and when writing these short stories he was far too fine a literary artist ever to allow himself to fall into dreary exhortation or "preachiness."

But besides such works of the imagination we have other books which give authentic descriptions of the charming old usages which have long been observed in Europe at Christmastide. Such a work is Washington Irving's "Bracebridge Hall," and some of the German books on the same subject are almost equally interesting.

GERMAN SCHOOL

MARTIN SCHONGAUER (1446–1488)

"The Adoration of the Wise Men." Original line engraving. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

In nearly all of the pictures by the old masters, on the subject of the Wise Men's visit to the infant Christ, we see that the gifts to the Holy Child generally consist of beautiful specimens of the goldsmith's art, — chalices, vases, etc., although the Gospel narrative tells us that these gifts were of "gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Many of these early painters began their career as goldsmiths. These artistic treasures must have been strangely out of place in the humble home at Nazareth where Jesus worked as a carpenter until he had attained the age of thirty years.

It is noteworthy that in this little picture the familiar figure of Saint Joseph does not appear.

Of minor ceremonials there was the singing of carols, the burning of the great Yule log on the wide hearth, and the hospitable entertaining, at great houses, of all the poor who might come to be fed. The great folk themselves still attach much ceremony to the eating of their Christmas plum pudding. This pudding, to be quite right, must be twelve months old when eaten; the new pudding is cooked and stored away while the year-old one is reheated and set on the dining-table, blazing with its ignited sauce of brandy and with its garniture of

holly sprigs. After the dinner there was a dance in the great hall where the Yule log blazed, and the greatest folk in the land frolicked with the humblest peasants.

Another quaint minor custom was the "Calling of the Waits." This was a sort of nocturnal serenade performed by players or by singers, and repeated for seven successive nights, before the house of each family of any importance in the community. My own recollection of this ceremony remains very vivid. My earlier school years were

passed in Ireland, a country which at that period abounded with quaint and semi-superstitious usages, many of which still live in my memory. Our sole minstrel on these occasions was Jim Curran, the blind fiddler. He was an elderly man whose face was sadly scarred from small-pox, but, being the only public musician in the town, he and his fiddle were indispensable whenever the poor folk got up a dance. The autocrat of the town, Father Denis Muldowney, the parish priest, was strongly opposed to these dances. He had one potent argument with

which to convince the refractory: it was his heavy horsewhip, and universal awe of this implement made it necessary that these dances should be organized and performed with great secrecy. Thackeray says somewhere that, in Ireland, he never knew of a secret plot which was not betrayed to the authorities by one of the plotters. However that may be, on one of these occasions an expectant dancer betrayed the matter to Father Muldowney and revealed to him the password, without which no one could be admitted through the carefully guarded

GERMAN SCHOOL

MARTIN SCHONGAUER (1446–1488)

"The Flight into Egypt." Original line engraving. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

THIS earlier picture may be compared with Dürer's later one of the same subject. Schongauer's is from a line engraving on copper, while Dürer's is a woodcut. In Dürer's composition we see the angels up among the clouds while the earlier master represents them as bending down a date palm so that Saint Joseph can gather the fruit. We also see that Schongauer had the intelligence to embellish his landscape with semi-tropical trees.

M S

door. The dance was in full whirl to the scraping of blind Jim Curran's fiddle when Father Muldowney, full of holy zeal, burst in like a whirlwind and laid about him lustily on the persons of man or maid until he flogged these terrified merry-makers out of the house. But the moment the priest broke in some one blew out the single tallow candle which illuminated these halls of revelry. All the guilty ones finally escaped — all except one; the blind man knew nothing of the cause of the sudden commotion until he felt the weight of Father

Muldowney's heavy whip. Then he cursed the unknown aggressor heartily. "No one but a blackguard would slash a poor *dark* man across the face with a whip." (I may mention that John Milton used the word "dark" in the same sense.) The consequence of Jim Curran's unintentional impiety was that he nearly starved. "He cursed the holy man!" was what one awe-stricken neighbour would whisper to another.

But the blind man still retained his monopoly, as orator and minstrel, of "calling the waits." He

FLORENTINE SCHOOL

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO (1449–1494)

"The Adoration of the Shepherds." From the original painting in the Academy, Florence. In the upper left-hand corner of the picture there is shown the Annunciation to the Shepherds.

THE head of the Madonna is evidently done under the influence of Sandro Botticelli, who was two years the senior of Ghirlandajo. The three figures of men to the left seem to be portraits carefully painted from life, while the old man whose hand is raised to his forehead appears to be of the conventional studio type which any clever artist might have produced. The left hand of the reclining infant shows us that, four centuries ago, a baby was prone to commit the modern peccadillo of sucking his thumb!

remembered the name of every man, woman, and child in the town, and in the case of large families he could name every child in the correct order of their seniority. Casual passers by in the street would often put the question to him: "Jim, who am I?" and I have never known him to be mistaken in his answer. During the nights of the week before Christmas my father's servants were on the *qui vive* for the coming of Jim Curran, and when he was heard performing at some neighbour's house little boys and girls would be awakened, has-

tily wrapped up and set at the windows in time for his arrival. Then there would be a prelude or overture in the shape of a lively Irish jig scraped on the fiddle, and, after that, standing before the house, he would bawl out the verbal salutation to the family — every word of which I remember so well. I give it exactly in his own words — tautology and all: "Good maarnin', Misther Blank, Good maarnin', Misthress Blank, Good maarnin', Masther Hadden, Good maarnin', Masther Hinnery (Henry), Good maarnin', Masther Freddy, Good maarnin',

Masther David, Good maarnin', Masther Richard, Good maarnin', Miss Ellie, Good maarnin', Miss Sarah, Good maarnin', Miss Fanny; — *on a cowld frasty maarnin'!*"

Then there would be a postlude performed on the fiddle, after which the "caller of the waits" would grope his way to the nearest house whose occupants could afford to pay him his expected shilling or half-crown on Christmas day.

It is a steep descent from the heights of Raphael and Rembrandt,

of Shakespeare and the blind John Milton, to Jim Curran, the blind Irish fiddler; his story belongs only remotely to the exalted subject of this book, but to me he was a very interesting "human document," and the poor man is dead and at rest for many a long year.

Before leaving the lower plane of Christmas comedy in the small Irish town where the blind fiddler "flourished," I will relate the story of an alarming event which occurred there on Christmas eve. I know that it was on the 24th day of

FLORENTINE SCHOOL

LORENZO DI CREDI (1459-1537)

"The Nativity." From the painting in the Academy, Florence.

THIS picture is a fine example of what artists and critics call "balance." Without the least appearance of stiff formality the painter has known how to give us a harmonious grouping in which the two sides of the composition balance each other — though in an apparently casual and unpremeditated way, while all the figures lead the eye to the recumbent infant. The Italian artists of nearly five centuries ago seem to have learned all that there is to know in the depicting of the human face and figure, but their ideas of landscape were still crude and formal, and the representation of landscape as it really is only dates from the nineteenth century.

December, because the three youngsters chiefly concerned narrowly escaped forfeiting their Christmas presents on the following day.

This story was afterwards known to the three little criminals by the title of "THE GIMP ON THE STOMACHER."

"What is 'gimp'?", I hear some reader ask, "and what's a 'stomacher'?" But the present writer, knowing that it would be "bad form" on his part to attempt to be too *instructive* with his readers,

refrains from answering questions. Let any such inquirer put the question to some fine old lady and she will be able to answer it, and if the same fine old lady is well informed on English history, she could tell the questioner that, in the year 1603, when Queen Elizabeth died, no fewer than three thousand gowns — each one with its elaborate stomacher — were found in the great queen's wardrobe.

The first snow of the year had just fallen, — to the inconvenience of all serious minded people, but

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Nativity." Original line engraving. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

THIS engraving, which bears the date of 1504, has taken definite rank as one of the masterpieces of this beautiful art. A fine impression of it, if procurable at all, would now be very costly, and it enjoys the doubtful honor of having been very cleverly counterfeited by an anonymous forger shortly after Dürer's death. What French critics call "the unities" were quite unthought of in the year 1504, and it is nothing against the beauty and charm of this picture that Dürer, depicting a scene in Palestine, gives it a background from his own city of Nuremberg.

to the delight of three lively little boys who were named, respectively, Henry, Freddy, and David, and who sallied out of the house, bent on doing all the mischief they could — so long as they steered clear on the safe side of avoiding a whipping. Each boy grabbed a handful of snow, which he squeezed into a snowball, and they ran up the Old Chapel Lane toward an irregular open space called the Pound Gardens, — a locality chiefly resorted to by pigs, geese, and the ragged but light-hearted children of the natives.

Arrived there, our three little boys perceived a woman crossing the "Gardens" and enveloped in her long, dark-blue cloak. By right this respectable person owned the stately name of Miss Elizabeth Prendergast, but all the neighbours called her Betty Pender. She was a tall, raw-boned woman of about forty, a dressmaker by trade, and no favourite in the town — for the sole reason that Betty, though poor, always kept herself clean and neat, and this was an offence to her slovenly neighbours. I once heard one of these women loudly re-

proaching Betty, in a public street, because she was clean. "Shure the dirt's wholesome," shouted the woman; and if her opinion were correct she and her neighbours must have been very healthy — because they were certainly very dirty!

Well, one of the little boys let fly a snowball at Betty Pender, and the aim was so good that it struck her just under the ear. Betty's first act was to push her finger down inside her collar and to hook out as much of the snow as she

could. Then she turned, saw, and recognized her aggressors, and changing her course she headed straight down the Old Chapel Lane which led to the house of the three bad little boys.

Matters had taken a serious turn. "*Now*," said Henry, "now we 're in for it!" Then the three ran down a parallel street, let themselves into the house by a side door, and stood in trepidation inside the front door, awaiting what was to happen. They stood in a line; Henry nearest to the door, Freddy standing behind

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471-1528)

"The Nativity." From the original painting in the National Museum, Naples.

DÜRER'S fertility of pictorial invention seems to have been almost inexhaustible. In studying his paintings, line engravings, and woodcuts, the earnest student will find this master's fertility quite marvellous. The present picture contains as much of invention as would furnish ten different pictures done by almost any famous painter of the nineteenth century.

him, and David standing behind *him*. There was no such thing as a door-bell in any house in the town, but the front door of each house of the "gentry" was furnished with a brass knocker. The etiquette of using this knocker was very strict. Common people never went further than to give one single knock, to the postman was reserved the right to give a double rat-tat; but each of the gentlefolk had his or her particular and personal roulade of raps to perform on the knocker, so that the servants inside could nearly always recognize who the visitor was.

Well, a single knock was sounded. Henry opened the door, — and there stood Betty Pender, looking immense and dreadful. There was a painful pause, after which Henry said to her in a faint voice, "What do you want?" "I want to see your mam*ma*," said Betty in a dry and business-like tone. Another pause, and then the question, "What do you want of her?" "I want to see your mam*ma*," was the answer. Then, after a longer and more painful pause, and still more timidly, little Henry said to her: "You're going

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471-1528)

"The Nativity," with the Annunciation to the Shepherds seen in the distance under the archway.

The four men and three women who ordered this painting, and whose family coats of arms are all in evidence, have caused, in their humility, their portraits to be painted very small, while, in comparison, the Virgin and Saint Joseph are gigantic.

Dürer had a strange fancy for finding artistic beauty in unfinished masonry. Many of his pictures are (as he supposed) embellished by backgrounds of this character.

to tell her about that snowball." Betty, with what Shakespeare calls "damnèd iteration," repeated the very same words for a third time: "I want to see your mam*ma*." Matters were now at a high tension; but they became worse. "Mam*ma*," who was in her room upstairs, hearing sounds at the front door, came slowly down the stairs, while with every step of her's the little boys felt that their doom was approaching closer and closer. Arrived at the front door, Betty said to her, "Will you have —" here the frightened little Freddy

rapidly conceived the completion of the sentence, which he believed would be — "these boys well punished"; but this was *not* what Betty went on to say; what she really said was, — and here she opened her big blue cloak and produced the waist of a dress which she was making for my mother, — "*Will you have gimp on the stomacher, ma'am?*" The loyal and kindly dressmaker, having got her answer, then departed, and the three little criminals scampered away — immensely relieved; and they received their Christmas presents next day.

Peace be to the soul of Elizabeth Prendergast!

What John Ruskin finely calls "The Noble human labour of the Engraver," has furnished this book with many of its illustrations, and preference has been deliberately given to the older masters, — men who wrought their pictures in the early ages of simplicity and sincerity. An intelligent French critic truly says that while the artist expects to work every day at his painting, it is only on his *good* days that he etches or engraves a plate. In noting the

difference between an etching and an engraving we might do well to adopt the more logical French term, which calls an etching "*une gravure à l'eauforte*," an engraving done by the etching process.

Original prints, designed as well as engraved by the same artist, are justly considered to be the best pictures; but reproductive prints, in which the design is painted by one artist but engraved by another, also hold an important — if a subordinate place. Our main debt of gratitude to the reproductive en-

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Adoration of the Kings." From the painting in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. This painting originally hung in Luther's Church at Wittenberg, and is dated 1504.

It is noteworthy that the paintings done about four centuries ago retain their freshness and the vividness of their colors far better than those of later centuries. The reason seems to be that these early masters always prepared their own colors — instead of buying them ready made; and more than one famous artist began as a poor boy who ground the material for colors in the studio of his master.

graver is that, in many cases, he has preserved for posterity the essential design of some great painting which has long since perished, and besides such lost paintings, whose design has been preserved by the engraver, we have excellent reproductive engravings done after master-painters who did not know how to etch or engrave their own pictures. Among such painters, who did not etch, may be cited the names of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Correggio, Raphael, Rubens, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. Sir Joshua used to declare that it was through the mez-

zotint engravings done after his paintings that he would be immortalized, and it is true that these engravings, printed on frail sheets of paper, will outlast any painting in oils.

Of such prints the great reproductive line-engraver, Longhi, in his book *La Calcografia*, rightly declares that they should not be called "copies" of the original painting, but rather *translations* out of the language of colour into the language of black-and-white.

But, while admitting the great utility as well as the beauty of the

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Adoration of the Kings." Woodcut. One of the series of "The Life of the Virgin." From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

A DISTINGUISHED American collector of fine prints, the late Henry F. Sewall, used to maintain that Dürer never expressed so much of genuine feeling as he did in his series of woodcuts of the "Life of the Virgin."

It should be remembered that the process of wood engraving is the very opposite of the process of the line engraver and the etcher. In line engraving and etching it is the *black* lines of his picture which the artist cuts into his copper plate, while in wood engraving the black lines remain untouched, and it is the *white* spaces which are cut away by the engraver.

finest of these "translations," the fact remains that they are subordinate in quality and artistic value to the prints designed as well as engraved (or etched) by such masters in painting as Albrecht Dürer, Claude Lorrain, and Rembrandt, among the old masters, as also, among the moderns, the prints done by such painters as Whistler, J. F. Millet, Meissonier, and the contemporary Scottish painter D. Y. Cameron.

Still another class of original etchers consists of men who never

painted pictures in colours, but who always etched or engraved from their own designs. Among these may be mentioned the French masters Charles Meryon and Félix Bracquemond, and also the English landscape etcher, Sir Seymour Haden.

Many of the illustrations in this book are taken from original and not from reproductive engravings, and, as I have stated already, have been photographed from precious original prints in the British Museum or in the Paris Bibliothèque

Nationale. Other illustrations were photographed direct from the paintings.

Besides the special note which accompanies each of our illustrations, a few general notes on the artists who made Christmas pictures may be of interest. I put these notes in chronological sequence, and it is interesting to remember that nearly every one of the best original engravings or etchings is the work of some artist who was equally able as a painter in oils.

Giotto, whose family name was Bondone, was born in Italy in 1266 and died in 1336. He is regarded as the founder of the great Italian school of painting, although he was the pupil of a still earlier painter, Cimabue. Giotto's pictures form an epoch in art.

Jehan Foucquet. Born in France, at Tours, about the year 1415, died 1483. Besides his paintings of large dimensions he was also a very successful painter of miniatures.

During Bulwer Lytton's lifetime he gave great offense to the French by writing of that nation that they were "great in all the arts — but supreme in none." Be that as it may it is certain that in Foucquet's time, more than four

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Flight into Egypt." Woodcut. One of the series of "The Life of the Virgin." From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

It is rare to find so much of poetical beauty in an old German picture as we see in Dürer's "Flight into Egypt." The old German masters were intensely honest, and often quite matter-of-fact; but here we have a really poetical landscape, and we see the angels who (as tradition says) accompanied the Holy Family and who afterward drew down the branches of the fruit trees so that Saint Joseph could reach to the fruit.

centuries ago, the Italian and the Flemish schools of painting were much superior to the French. In the 18th and 19th centuries all this was changed, so that to-day France is probably the first of art-producing nations; so much so that it has become a matter of course that if a clever young man wishes to become a great painter he must go to Paris to study his art. With regard to American students the result is sometimes good and sometimes bad; for while it is true that most of our successful contemporary American painters have studied in Paris it is also true that many of the American students get spoiled in Paris as good Americans yet they never become competent painters.

Hans Memling. One of the earliest masters of the Flemish school. The dates of his birth and his death are not accurately known, but it is believed that he was born between the years 1430 and 1440. Most of his life was passed in Bruges. He is considered to be the greatest painter of the early Flemish school.

Andrea Mantegna, Italian painter and engraver, was born near Padua in 1431. Vasari records, in his "Lives of the Artists," that Mantegna came of parents who were very poor and that he herded cattle in his youth. When ten years old he was adopted by the artist Francesco Squarcione, and made such good use of his opportunities that at the age of seventeen he painted a fine "Virgin and Child" for the high altar of the

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Repose in Egypt." One of the series of "The Life of the Virgin." Woodcut. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

NEARLY every one of the famous pictures of the Holy Family represents its members as posing in idleness; but Dürer here gives us the carpenter Saint Joseph at work with his adze; the Virgin Mother is at work with her needle, the infant Christ is asleep in his cradle, while some merry little cherubs are either playing or gathering up the chips which the carpenter has scattered. In this charming picture we again notice Dürer's fondness for giving us a background — not of ruins, but buildings which are not completed.

Church of Santa Sofia, Padua. The Italian galleries are rich in the works of this early master. The British National Gallery possesses a fine altar piece by him. His series of nine frescoes, representing the Triumphs of Julius Cæsar, once were owned by Charles the First of England, and after the king's beheading they were bought by Oliver Cromwell. They still remain in England. The engravings made after these frescoes are also attributed to Mantegna; but these, and indeed all of his engravings, are now so rare as to be almost unprocurable. He died at the age of seventy-five.

Mantegna's style was lofty and noble, although, to modern eyes, it looks a little harsh and archaic.

Martin Schongauer, German goldsmith, painter, and engraver, was born at Colmar in 1446, and died there in 1488. His contemporaries gave him the pet name of "Handsome Martin." His engravings, all from his own designs, are much the most important part of this master's work. Many of them were counterfeited even during his lifetime. He was old enough to have been the father of his successor, Albrecht Dürer, and it is recorded that Dürer journeyed from Nuremberg to Colmar to visit Schongauer, whom he had never seen, but on his arrival there he found that the elder master had died shortly before.

Domenico Ghirlandajo, whose family name was Bigordi, was born in Florence in

1449, and died there in 1494. He was the son of a Florentine goldsmith. Besides surpassing most of his contemporaries as a painter he also excelled in the difficult art of working in mosaic. Bryan states that Ghirlandajo's capacity in drawing was more correct and graceful than was usual in his time and that the expression of his heads was superior to that of any artist who had preceded him.

He was called to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV and aided in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel. His greatest achievement is generally believed to be the frescoes in the church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. This is the church which Michelangelo affectionately called "his bride." But perhaps the greatest honour which

Ghirlandajo won was that he was the teacher of Michelangelo.

Lorenzo di Credi was born at Florence in 1459 and died there in 1537. He was a son of the goldsmith Andrea di Credi, and was pupil and assistant of Verrocchio, along with Leonardo da Vinci and Perugino. It will be remembered that later on Perugino was the teacher of Raphael. Di Credi's works are all easel pictures and were done at a time when his greatest contemporaries often worked in fresco. The Italian word fresco simply means "fresh." The freshly plastered wall of a building was painted upon by the fresco process and the artist made his picture so that his colours sank into the mortar of the wall. These frescoes had an excellent

GERMAN SCHOOL

ALBERT DÜRER (1471–1528)

"The Virgin Seated by a Wall." Original line engraving. From the proof in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

Of all the beautiful representations by Dürer of the Madonna with her child this one seems to be the fullest of the sentiment of motherhood. The year 1514 was one of great achievement by Dürer. It is the date of this picture and also of the magnificent and mysterious Melancolia. The latter is one of the most impressive pictures in existence, and yet no one can tell exactly what it means. One is tempted to think that in Dürer's mystical compositions he did not quite know himself!
Dürer's love for designing most picturesque architecture is finely exemplified in this famous print.

and permanent effect, but they had the drawback that the picture could never be transported from one place to another. When Napoleon conquered nearly all of Europe (except England) he gave command that many of the great Italian frescoes should be removed to Paris, but in every case where this was attempted the old plaster on which the fresco had been painted, crumbled away, and thus some masterpieces were ruined.

It is quite remarkable that so many of the great Italian artists were Florentines. From the days of Dante — six and a half centuries ago — Florence has been the mother and the nurse of poets and of artists.

Bernardino Luini was born at Luino, near Lake Maggiore, between the years 1460 and 1470, and died at Milan shortly after the year 1533. He was so strongly attracted by the works of Leonardo da Vinci that, in his later works, it is very difficult to distinguish them from the works of Leonardo.

His finest paintings are at Milan and many of them are done in fresco. Some of these which were done on the exterior walls of buildings are still in a good state of preservation, and notwithstanding his close imitation of the great Leonardo (which imitation was perhaps unconscious) Luini ranks as a master in his own right.

LOMBARD–MILANESE SCHOOL

BERNARDINO LUINI (1475–1534)

"The Nativity." From the painting in the Louvre, Paris. In the upper right-hand portion of the picture is shown the Annunciation to the Shepherds.

Luini was the most eminent of the pupils of the illustrious Leonardo da Vinci. His style strongly resembled that of his master, and Luini has left us a far greater number of finished pictures than Leonardo did. The truth is that Leonardo was so much occupied with other matters, — philosophy, mathematics, poetry, etc., that his finished paintings are comparatively few.

In Luini's picture, as in many others on this subject, the background shows us the annunciation of the angel to the shepherds. It never troubled these naïve old masters to represent in the same picture two events occurring at different times.

In our own day several able artists declare that they have no intention of imitating Whistler, — while they *do* imitate him, unconsciously.

Albrecht Dürer, the greatest of German artists, both as painter and engraver, was born at Nuremberg in 1471. The father was a goldsmith, and Albrecht, the third of eighteen children, worked at the same craft before he devoted his great powers to painting and engraving. His most famous engravings were done on copper and in the pure line manner; also at least some of the beautiful engravings on wood, after his designs, were done by the master himself, and some authorities ascribe to Dürer the invention of the etching process. All of his works are noble in style and beautiful in drawing, and if to modern eyes these

pictures seem to be somewhat rigid and "Gothic," it is because of the absolute artistic honesty which impelled him to depict every object exactly as he saw it. But along with this he possessed immense powers of imagination and invention. He was an eager student of mathematics, and his journal (which still exists) shows him to have been a serious and simple-hearted man. It is recorded that his married life was embittered by the conduct of Agnes, his shrewish wife. Dürer died in the year 1528. His friend, Philip Melanchthon, has written of him that "his least merit was his art."

Jacopo Tintoretto was born in Venice in 1518 and died there in 1594. His family name was Robusti.

It is noteworthy that the names of very few of the old Italian masters have come down to posterity correctly. Some affectionate pet-name took the place of their legal cognomen. The name Tintoretto really means "the little dyer" because his father was a dyer by trade. Similarly the dignified name Guercino really means "squint-eye" and that artist's real name was Barbieri; but we must accept the nicknames which their contemporaries gave to their favourite artists.

Tintoretto was a pupil of Titian, who it is recorded, dismissed him because he feared his rivalry. Tintoretto adopted the ambitious motto: "Titian's colouring and Michelangelo's drawing," and to a great extent he vindicated this audacious programme. John Ruskin places him

above Titian and beside Michelangelo in his mastery of composition, drawing, and colour, but Tintoretto was very unequal in his works, although some of them may merit Ruskin's superlative praise. The painter Annibal Caracci said of him that if sometimes he was the equal of Titian he was often the inferior of himself.

Tintoretto's painting, Paradise, in the Ducal Palace, Venice, is the largest picture on canvas in existence.

Titian (Tiziano Vecelli). The chief glory of the Venetian school, as Rubens was of the Flemish. He was born near Venice in 1477 and died in 1576. At the age of eighteen he was considered to be the finest painter of Italy, and he retained this supremacy until he was

LOMBARD–MILANESE SCHOOL

BERNARDINO LUINI (1475–1534)

"The Adoration of the Magi." From the painting in the Louvre, Paris.

HERE we find that Luini has made the perilous experiment of bisecting his composition from top to bottom by a great pillar of wood, and yet the picture is a noble one.

The scene which we see in the distance must represent the retinues of the three kings who are already in the presence of the infant Christ. Luini, like many others of the old artists, depicts the infant as a child of about two years of age.

cut down by the plague at the great age of ninety-nine, while still in the full possession of all his faculties.

He was the valued friend of kings and emperors, and he himself led a princely life. Once when painting the portrait of the Emperor Charles V Titian dropped his brush, which was immediately picked up and handed to him by the emperor, who said, "It becomes Cæsar to serve Titian." His portraits show him to have been a man of noble countenance and of superb physique.

Jacopo Bassano was born at Bassano in 1510 and died there in 1592. It is supposed that he studied under Titian. He is accounted the first Italian master who painted "genre" subjects. That French word "genre" is as unsatisfying as our contemporary word "process"

as applied to a well-known method for the reproduction, for the printer, of original drawings in black-and-white.

As we know, the word "genre" simply means sort or kind, but in art lore it has come to mean pictures of a familiar or domestic character — as distinguished from pictures representing historic or other more exalted subjects.

Bassano excelled in the painting of landscape with animals and he usually chose his subject from Scripture scenes in which they could suitably be introduced. He had four sons and many other students who enabled him to multiply his own pictures. Indeed down to the time of Rembrandt (1607-1669) it was the recognized usage that a master painter had the right to sign and to

VENETIAN SCHOOL

TIZIANO VECELLI (TITIAN) (1477-1576)

"The Holy Family." From the painting in the National Gallery, London.

If ever an artist possessed the "grand style" Titian certainly had it. In all the pictures produced during his long and active life, there is not one which betrays the slightest feebleness or pettiness. In this picture the Madonna and the Child are noble, Saint Joseph is conspicuously noble, and even the scrubby kneeling shepherd youth has a nobility of his own.

sell as his own the works done under his direction by his students and his apprentices.

Fray Juan Bautista Mayno was born in Spain in 1569 and died at Madrid in 1649.

He became a Dominican monk and practised the painting of Biblical subjects in the convent of S. Pedro Martyr, Toledo, where he acquired fame especially for his altar-pieces.

Mayno had the honour of being drawing-master to King Philip IV of Spain, and he executed for the king the celebrated battle-piece in which he represented Olivarez animating the troops to victory by displaying to them the portrait of their King Philip.

This absurd flattery of royalty cannot be understood by plain democratic Americans, and yet, from remote antiquity to the present day, it has been scrupulously observed wherever a king was concerned.

Rubens, Sir Peter Paul, was born of Flemish parents in Westphalia in the year 1577, and is regarded as being the crowning glory of the Flemish school of painters. His artistic endowments and his energy yielded to the world an immense number of pictures, nearly every one of which exhibits his stately and vigorous style. As a colourist he was especially eminent. Besides his achievements in art, Rubens was a man of great versatility. He was courtier, ambassador, eminent citizen, and a man greatly beloved for his kindly nature.

"The finest gentleman that ever carried a sword" is what a contemporary wrote of him.

Rubens died at Antwerp in the year 1640.

Gerard van Honthorst was born at Utrecht in 1590, and died there in 1656. He was a pupil of the Dutch painter Abraham Bloemart, but having afterward spent several years in Rome his later style was considerably influenced by the masters of the Italian school. As he painted many night scenes lighted by torches or candles he was called in Italy Gherardo dalle Notti.

Honthorst was a very prosperous artist, working for the Princes of Orange and also for the King of Denmark, and pic-

tures by him can be seen in most of the public galleries of Europe.

He was very industrious and painted very rapidly, just as Rubens also did, and in consequence a great number of his pictures are still in existence and they have preserved their freshness of colour unusually well. In this respect he had a great advantage over the English master Sir Joshua Reynolds. The latter dabbled in amateur chemistry and often made his colours by some new and untried method. The consequence is that some beautiful paintings by Reynolds have faded sadly and are now best known through the fine engravings which were done from them.

Jakob Jordaens was born at Antwerp in 1593 and died there in 1678. It is

VENETIAN SCHOOL

JACOPO BASSANO (1510–1592)

"The Annunciation to the Shepherds." From an engraving by Cornelis Visscher, in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

This Venetian picture looks much more like a work of the Dutch school, but it was engraved by a Dutchman who possessed a strong personality and it is evident that Cornelis Visscher infused much of his own ideas into Bassano's painting. Even the sky and the atmosphere are essentially Dutch. Rembrandt's treatment of the same subject is infinitely more vivid.

We see that ample provision has been made for supplying water to the flock. This may have been necessary in Palestine, but the truth is that in America sheep very seldom drink water; their morning meal of dewy grass gives them nearly all the fluid which they need.

generally supposed that he was a pupil of Rubens, who was his senior by sixteen years; but this cannot be proved, although it is certain that the two were very good friends and that there is a strong resemblance in their styles. In the case of Jordaens, however, this resemblance does not rise to the height of a refinement which is present in the works of Rubens but absent in the works of Jordaens. But notwithstanding this, Jordaens is a recognized master. His power to master technical difficulties in the making of a picture was about as great as that of Franz Hals or Van Dyck.

Antonino Van Dyck (Sir Anthony Van Dyck), was born at Antwerp in 1599. In 1615 he became a pupil of the great painter Rubens. In 1632 King Charles

the First of England sent an ambassador to bring him to England, and later conferred on him the honour of knighthood. Van Dyck painted for the English king his own portrait and the portraits of his wife and family many times. He also painted portraits of many of the British nobility. In England Van Dyck lived in a grand and almost regal manner. His works, mainly portraits, number about nine hundred and fifty. Van Dyck died in London in 1641 and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. He was one of the few supreme masters of portrait painting.

Rembrandt, whose surname was Van Rijn, was the supreme Dutch artist, both as painter and etcher. He was born at Leyden in 1607. His father owned a

VENETIAN SCHOOL

JACOPO TINTORETTO (1518–1594)

"The Adoration of the Shepherds." From the etching by Baron Denon.

TINTORETTO'S picture is curious as giving a two-story representation of the scene. The etching by Baron Denon is not a good one, the *blacks* in it are too black and too evenly distributed. A picture in black and white should contain only one dominant and fundamental note of black, and after that the subsidiary grays — dark or light — should lead up to the white tones of the composition.

Denon was a learned Egyptologist and was a protégé of Napoleon.

windmill, and the family was in fairly easy circumstances. Rembrandt was the fifth of six children. His father wished to give him a classical education, but when he saw that his son's bent toward art was overpowering, he yielded and apprenticed him to an artist of Leyden. Rembrandt certainly cared little for letters, if we may judge by the fact that, in signing his pictures, he had more than one way of spelling his own name.

His paintings are now the pride of the greatest galleries in the world, and his etchings are equally the pride of public museums and the prize of the private collector. He could never have been the superlatively original artist that he was if he had gone to Italy to study and if he had been influenced by

the conventional banalities of the Italian school of his time. He never was a very prosperous artist. In this respect he was excelled by some of his own pupils. As he grew old and was producing his very finest work he found that his popularity had waned. He was declared insolvent in the year 1656, his financial troubles having been partly brought about through his passion for collecting curiosities of various kinds, which included paintings and engravings by other artists. He died poor and obscure, at Amsterdam, in the year 1669.

One of his smaller etchings, one of the thirty-three portraits which he had etched of himself, was recently sold at auction in London for the unprecedented price of two thousand pounds sterling.

Bartolomé Estéban Murillo was born in Seville in 1618, and died there in 1682.

As was the case with many artists of genius he had, at first, to paint many pictures which he sold at a tithe of their real value, but later on fortune smiled upon him so that he became one of the most prosperous artists of his time. He made the acquaintance of the great Velasquez who was the renowned painter for the Spanish court. Velasquez gave him much valuable advice and procured for him admission to the Royal galleries of pictures at Madrid.

A witty old professor of architecture at Columbia University, New York, once said to his students that classical music was in reality very much better than it

sounded! Similarly the pictures of some recognized masters are very much better than they look; but Murillo's case was quite different, and not only did his paintings win the admiration of the educated specialists but their beauty also won the admiration of "the man in the street" of his time.

Murillo lost his life by falling from a scaffolding where he was painting the upper part of a large picture.

Such were the artists whose Christmas pictures now illustrate this book. In selecting our illustrations we have purposely avoided the inclusion of pictures which are already very well known.

SPANISH SCHOOL

FRAY JUAN BAUTISTA MAYNO (1569–1649)

"The Adoration of the Magi." From the painting in the Prado Gallery, Madrid.

A REALLY beautiful picture by an artist who is comparatively unknown. We see in it far more of elegance and less of harshness than we usually find in the Spanish school of painting.

An ancient Church tradition, generally accepted, states that one of the three kings from the East, who came to worship the infant Christ, was a Negro.

The composers of Christmas Music hold honourable rank among the artists who have celebrated the Nativity. Handel's oratorio, The Messiah (composed in the year 1741), contains some imperishable treasures of such music. Of these the most admired are probably, taken in their sequence, the contralto solo, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion," followed by its chorus; the bass solo, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light"; and the magnificent chorus, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is

given." Next comes the Pastoral Symphony, which leads up to the soprano solo, beginning, "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night" — which solo is followed by the triumphant chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The Pastoral Symphony for the orchestra only is as simple as a psalm tune, but yet it is truly sublime. It was of this piece that King George the Third said to

FLEMISH SCHOOL

PETER PAUL RUBENS (1577–1640)

"The Nativity." From an engraving by Lucas Vorsterman in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

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WHEN we come to a picture by Rubens we contemplate the work of a very great man. Strict partisans of the Italian school might say that this picture is too familiar and too "dutchy"; well, so it should be. Probably no artist ever painted a really fine picture unless he depicted the familiar scenes among which he lived.

Thus the pseudo-Greek pictures by French artists, such as David and Ingres, who worked in the times of Napoleon, are correct and elegant, but they are as cold as a stone. Rubens, as usual, uses his wife as his model for the Madonna, and the fine old woman who kneels before the infant Christ is a portrait of the mother of the artist's wife.

Handel, "When I hear it I seem to see the stars shining!" That humdrum monarch has not left many sayings which are so apt and so imaginative as this; and it should be recorded to the King's credit that he always upheld Handel when that great composer was neglected by most of the fashionable folk of England.

These people were divided into two hostile clans,—the partisans of Handel and the partisans of a now forgotten Italian musician named Bononcini. It was on this

question that the famous epigram, generally ascribed to Jonathan Swift, was written:

> "Some say, compared with Bononcini,
> That Handel is a perfect ninny;
> While others hold that he, to Handel,
> Is scarcely fit to hold a candle:
> Strange all this difference should be
> 'Twixt *tweedledum* and *tweedledee!*"

Dean Swift hated all music,—just as much as he hated nearly all mankind; and a recent writer has well said of him that he would have been the greatest of the British humorists were it not that his humour was always *ill*-humour.

Never can I forget the first time I heard great music sung by a great singer. It was at Steinway Hall, New York. The composer was Handel and the singer was Christine Nilsson. Her first number in the oratorio was the recitative, "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, and lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which

shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Then the movement of the music changes, and Nilsson sang on, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying" . . . The solo here leads up to the magnificent chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

I will here digress to quote a fine saying of an eminent Frenchman about this great singer: In

DUTCH SCHOOL

GERARD VAN HONTHORST (GHERARDO DALLE NOTTI) (1590–1656)

"The Adoration of the Shepherds." From the original painting.

It will be seen that this famous picture is lighted — not from the sky, nor from torches or lamps — but from a mysterious light which emanates from the body of the Holy Child. The cleverness of the picture is undeniable; but yet it approaches the later period when art, pure and simple, began to be supplanted by artifice.

those days the two most famous soprani were Nilsson and Patti, and Sainte-Beuve was the foremost critic of the day. Some one, praising Patti and quoting from Shakespeare, said to the critic that her voice was like "the lark" which "at heaven's gate sings." "Yes," responded Sainte-Beuve, "but Nilsson's is like a voice from the *other* side of the gate!"

What incomparably fine English is that of the King James version of the Bible! Nothing else quite equals it. Notice the word "sud-

denly" just quoted. I have found in the writings of such masters of English as Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, and Robert Louis Stevenson that odious phrase "all of a sudden" or "on a sudden." How would the beautiful diction of the text above quoted be degraded if it should read — "and *all of a sudden* there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host"! And how would we like it if some one should say, "she came in all of a quick," or "he went out all of a slow"? Certainly the translators of King James's time had finer

FLEMISH SCHOOL

JAKOB JORDAENS (1593–1678)

"The Nativity." From an engraving by Pieter de Jode in the old royal collection of the kings of France.

JAKOB JORDAENS was an eminent painter in his own right, although his fame is overshadowed by that of his more brilliant contemporary Rubens. Still there is much in common between the works of these two representative Flemish masters.

The engraving by Pieter de Jode is exceedingly fine. Rubens — like Sir Joshua Reynolds in a later century — trained a notable school of engravers to interpret his pictures, and Sir Joshua used to declare that it was through his engravers that he expected to be immortalized. It is certain that the frail sheet of paper on which some great engraving is printed is unique, there is only one of it; while an engraved plate is capable of printing at least fifty fine proofs, thus multiplying the painter's composition fifty-fold.

taste in the choice of words than we have now. I confess that the phrase just condemned is a "pet aversion" of mine, and there is no excuse for it — seeing that we could always substitute for it the more elegant and expressive single word "suddenly."

Other great artists who have composed Christmas music include Johann Sebastian Bach, Franz Liszt, and Mendelssohn. The last-named master died before his "Christus" was half finished, but it contains a lovely trio for male voices, unac-

companied. It is the song of the Three Wise Men who came from the East to hail the infant Saviour, and it is set to the words (as translated from the German), "Say, where is He born the King of Judea? For we have seen his star and are come to adore Him."

But among the most famous music on the subject must be included the ancient Latin hymn, *Adeste Fideles, lœti triumphantes*, with the refrain after each verse, *Venite adoremus Dominum.* This hymn is well known through the

English translation, "O come, all ye faithful," and it is sung to perhaps the noblest of all hymn tunes. In American tune books it is sometimes miscalled the "Portuguese Hymn"; but there is nothing Portuguese about it, first or last. It was composed by the English musician John Reading (1680), and it has been finely harmonized, also in England, by Vincent Novello. This harmonizing has deservedly taken rank as a masterpiece of its kind. Without altering a note of Reading's tune Novello harmonized each of the four verses differently.

He gives us first a solo for the soprano, next a duet for tenor and bass, thirdly a trio for alto, tenor, and bass, — which is specially admired, — and finally the same tune as a quartet. In each of the four verses the harmonic colouration is quite different, but all of them are beautiful.

One more citation will close this branch of the subject. It is the *Cantique de Noël*, by the modern French composer Adolphe Adam, and is set in the English translation to the verses beginning:

FLEMISH SCHOOL

SIR ANTHONY VAN DYCK (1599-1641)

"The Virgin and Child." From the original painting in the Corsini Gallery, Rome.

THE Flemish painter, Antonius van Dyck, was ennobled by King Charles I of England, and it was a great day for art in England when van Dyck came there to paint the King and his lords.

During his short life of forty-two years he painted a great number of masterly pictures, — and never a bad one. He was the favorite pupil of Rubens and it was Rubens who first proclaimed the great abilities of his pupil. His English portraits are entirely British in style, but this Madonna is frankly Flemish.

"O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining.
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth."

Probably Bach or Handel would have condemned it as not being severely ecclesiastical in style; but yet it is a lovely melody.

If I have said so much about Christmas music it is because it is probably the form of art, on this subject, which is the most neglected.

It would be out of place for me to attempt to preach a sermon in the pages of a book, but

I feel constrained to say that although I am not a Roman Catholic, yet I think that Protestant bodies do not always accord due credit to their older sister church for what she has done for us.

For many centuries, until the time of Luther, it was the ancient church which conserved for us nearly all that we now know of Christianity, and she was the patron of nearly all the great religious pictures. At least two of these beliefs seem to me to be both beautiful

SPANISH SCHOOL

BARTOLOMÉ ESTÉBAN MURILLO (1618–1682)

"The Birth of the Virgin." From the painting in the Louvre, Paris.

Murillo's picture must be well known to all visitors to the galleries of the Louvre. His beautiful picture of the Immaculate Conception is to be seen in the same great collection of masterpieces.

Some few years ago, and probably still, Murillo's picture of the Immaculate Conception was insured by the authorities of the Louvre at a higher rate than any other of the great pictures which surround it.

and ennobling: the one is the worship of womanhood and motherhood in the person of the Virgin Mary, and the other is the praying for the dead. What a comfort it must be to a devout Catholic to feel that he is doing good to the "immortal part" of some friend — loved and lost — by praying for the repose of his soul.

I remember a touching little incident which occurred in New York. My dear old mother, who was a Methodist, had died, and our kindly Irish cook prayed twice

daily for the repose of the old woman's soul. A Catholic friend of the cook's told her that it was wrong to pray for a deceased heretic, and the cook carried the question to her father confessor. The good priest's decision was in this wise: "My daughter, I cannot tell you whether such prayers can do good to the soul of a deceased heretic, — but your prayers will certainly do good to your own soul."

Other and different Christmas usages I took part in, later on, in

Canada. The young fellows who could sing rehearsed some Christmas glees — and even anthems — and after nightfall on Christmas week we went around to the several houses where dwelt our young lady friends and gave them a vocal serenade, while we stood in the dark in front of each house. We never announced these visits; but women, old or young, have a genius for finding out the things which they want to find out, and it generally happened that after the serenade was concluded the front door of the house would be opened

and the choristers would be invited to partake of a supper which had been prepared in advance.

But how some of our singers could manage to eat four or five hearty suppers, at as many different houses and on the same night, is a thing which, to me, "exceeded the marvellous and bordered on the supernatural." While serenading one of those happy Canadian homes, where dwelt four merry young sisters, the present writer underwent a sort of protest or remonstrance against the stiff formality of manner which he had acquired

SPANISH SCHOOL

BARTOLOMÉ ESTÉBAN MURILLO (1618–1682)

"The Flight into Egypt." From the painting in the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa.

MURILLO was, perhaps, the most graceful of the Spanish masters, although he never attained to the grim strength of Velasquez. We see that the picture represents a night scene where the Holy Family flee into Egypt to escape the vengeance of King Herod. The face of the sleeping infant is very beautifully depicted. The Virgin Mother rides on an ass while Saint Joseph trudges along contentedly on foot.

during his years of residence in England; the four sisters hauled me out of the house, flung me down, and vigorously rubbed my face and neck with snow, and I think this unceremonious discipline did me good!

With regard to the present almost universal custom of giving and receiving Christmas presents, a very influential New York journal has recently printed a series of articles to demonstrate that this kindly custom has degenerated into an onerous and compulsory

tax. The writer cites the case of a clerk on a moderate salary, whose first lapse from honesty was when he paid a great price for the seal-skin sacque upon which his wife had set her heart, but which was far beyond her husband's legitimate resources. It is true that even the most beneficent social usages may be pushed to extremes; but we nevertheless hope that the kindly custom of giving and receiving Christmas presents may long continue.

An interesting fact, of which I have personal knowledge, is, that

the educated and refined Jews in our community are not a whit behind their Gentile neighbours in remembering their friends, with presents, when Christmas comes.

It cannot be proved that the twenty-fifth day of December is the actual day of the year when Christ was born; but what of that? It is the Event itself which all Christendom celebrates, and for that purpose one day of the year is about as good as another. Moreover, the existing date has been observed ever since the fifth century.

I recall a most ingeniously chosen text for a Christmas sermon preached in old Trinity Church, New York, by the eminent rector, the late Dr. Morgan Dix. His subject was the Nativity, together with the progress of the Christian faith, and his text was only this fragment of a sentence in the Gospel: "For they are dead which sought the young child's life."

Oh the power of utter helplessness, the touching beauty of innocent simplicity! Our world is bad enough as we know it—but how

much worse would it be had a new spirit not entered, to change and better it, on that first Christmas day! Truly the ancient Hebrew seer — who was poet as well as prophet — foresaw the better time to come when he wrote the words, "And a little child shall lead them."

THE END

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